

IT'S MY BUSINESS

# Rabbi Issamar Ginzberg Galvanizes Global Audiences





BY GUR ARYEH HERZIG

*“Your problem is that you love yourself too much,” he shouts into his cellphone over the din of morning traffic in Yerushalayim. “I know it’s painful to see your name removed from the title. After all, you built the agency up from scratch. Try not to think of yourself. You are in business to make money, not for kavod. The merger makes sense. Go for it. B’hatzlachah!”*

*He strides along Rechov Yaakovzon on the way home from Shacharis, his tallis bag under one arm and his cellphone in the other hand. The phone rings again. “Hi, Kevin. I studied your email with the layout of the mall in Reno. Doubling the size of that store may actually compound the problem headquarters is having with that location. I would also recommend closing one entrance and limiting the selection to keep your walk-in traffic focused.”*

*He walks up the street near his home on Rechov Imrei Binah. Once again the phone rings. “Thanks for getting back to me. I checked the date, and as an observant Jew, I will not be able to address the annual symposium in Dublin because it conflicts with our holiday of Passover. Let’s be in touch next year.”*

*After a quick breakfast, he will be off to the kollel to learn and teach Torah until the afternoon. His phone will be off for the next few hours.*

*I met Rabbi Issamar Ginzberg in Boro Park after he was a featured speaker at the recent Nationwide Parnassah Expo and Business Networking Event, held in New Jersey’s Meadowlands Arena. A former resident of Brooklyn, he moved with his wife and three children to Eretz Yisrael five years ago.*

### Defining the Person

A multiple-choice question: Reb Issamar Ginsberg is (a) a chassid of a Rebbe (b) a Rebbe himself (c) a psychologist (d) an entrepreneur (e) a gifted speaker (f) a *talmid chacham* (g) a business strategist (h) a marketing expert.

Answer: All of the above.

Reb Issamar challenges all our stereotypes. He looks younger than his thirty-three years. Then he starts talking and you have to do a double-take. He sounds like someone at least twice his age. His words of advice are calmly delivered — the kind of advice one would expect from a seasoned businessman.

His appearance also rocks all our preconceived notions. His ebullient face is topped by a round velvet Chassidic hat and framed by shoulder-length *peyos*. His long black *rekel* covers his slender frame from shoulder to ankle. We automatically associate such a look with that of a sheltered person light-years away from the high-tech corporate world in which he spends his out-of-*beis medrash* hours.

Here again, things are not what they seem. Reb Issamar is as totally immersed in the world of advanced technological sales techniques as he is in — *l'havdil* — the deeper meanings of a *shtikel Noam Elimelech*. He is as adept at giving a *shiur* on an intricate *blatt Gemara* as he is in addressing a conference on global marketing strategies.

### A Short History

Rabbi Issamar Ginzberg grew up in Brooklyn. His education began in the Bobover Yeshivah and continued in the Chuster Rebbe's yeshivah, Toras Chessed. Later he traveled to Eretz Yisrael and learned in the yeshivah of his cousin, the Pittsburgher Rebbe of Ashdod. From there he went on to the Mirrer Yeshivah in Yerushalayim. He also completed a two-year program in rabbinical outreach at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach.

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at giving a  
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is in addressing  
a conference  
on global  
marketing  
strategies.

So, you will ask, from which high school did he graduate? What colleges did he attend? From which universities did he earn degrees? What diplomas adorn his walls?

The answer: None of the above.

That's correct. He has no degree from any institution of higher learning. The only schools he ever attended were yeshivos and mesivtas. He never took any college courses. In fact, the only times he ever walked into the halls of a university were to *give* lectures, not to attend them.

His special passion is studying various business models. When he was younger, he noticed that a certain brand of laptop was being offered at the low price of \$200 each if purchased in a specified quantity. He promptly bought that quantity and sold the laptops, one by one, for \$300 apiece.



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This initial foray into the world of marketing was just the beginning. That successful little venture piqued his interest — not so much because he made money but because he gained an understanding of how money is made. He wanted to understand business tactics and business structures thoroughly.

As he immersed himself in these topics, he discovered a personal talent for studying a strategy that worked in one venture and tweaking it a bit to apply it to a totally unrelated venture. Soon he found himself doling out business advice to friends, family, and anyone else who would listen. The advice was well received and proved to be beneficial.

He went on to study large corporations. As a lark, he sent them some of his individually tailored ideas for increasing market share. Of course, most corporations ignored him, but to his surprise a few actually responded and some even adopted his creative approaches. His career in business was launched.

Rabbi Issamar Ginzberg is a true autodidact, a self-taught person. He is an avid reader with a voracious appetite for knowledge in a wide variety of practical fields. He has taught himself whatever he needs to know, and he continues to do so.

### Guarding the Eyes

Recently, he met with the chief of the online sales division of a major international airline. There were a few others present, and they were surprised when Rabbi Ginzberg asked to be introduced to the man he came to meet.

“What!” they asked incredulously. “You don’t recognize him? His picture is prominently displayed on our website. Everyone in the industry knows who he is.”

“You don’t get it, my friends,” he replied. “Of course I know who he is. Of course I studied his website several



Addressing the Comm 2012 Communications Conference.

times. I certainly know who he *is*, but that does not mean that I know what he looks like. My computer has a filter. No images of any kind appear on the screen when I surf the internet."

A computer is vital for Reb Issamar's work. Nevertheless, he does not keep a desktop computer, even a thoroughly filtered one, at home. He never even leaves his filtered laptop at home, taking it with him when he travels.

He is proud of that. He is proud that he arrived where he is today without ever enrolling in a college. He is particularly proud of his *yichus*; his genealogy would cover several pages and read like a "who's who" of Chassidic masters.

#### Both a Rebbe and a Chassid

Issamar Ginzberg is named after his illustrious ancestor the *Admor* Harav Issamar'l Rosenbaum, *zy"a* — the Kretchenifer-Nadvorner Rebbe. This Rebbe, who had a *beis medrash* in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan for many years, was *niftar* about forty years ago, leaving behind

ten children. His sons and sons-in-law were *Admorim* and *Rabbanim*, each with his own unique style. Today, scores of his descendants serve the Jewish people as *Admorim* in Israel and in the Diaspora.

Rechel, his oldest child, became the *Rebbetzin* of her first cousin, the Rebbe Yissachar Ber Shapiro of Kechnia, *zy"a*. After her husband's passing at a young age, she remained a widow for the remaining fifty years of her life. Many Jews came to her for *brachos*, and she was revered by many prominent *Rabbanim*.

Reb Issamar Ginzberg was very close to *Rebbetzin* Rechel Shapiro, who was his great-grandmother. It was she who encouraged him to become the new Kechnier Rebbe, filling her husband's position, which had been vacant for so many years.

Wanting to please her, he tried opening a Kechnier *shtiebel* in Lakewood. After some time it became clear that it wasn't meant to be, and he threw himself into the world of business.

At that time, he and his *eishes chayil* made the momentous decision to move

to Yerushalayim, fulfilling a longtime dream. There, he would serve *Hashem Yisbarach* with the added holiness and purity of living in the Land.

Reb Issamar had another relative with whom he was very close, his great-great-uncle Harav Asher Yeshaya Rosenbaum, *zy"a*, known as the Nadvorner-Chadera Rebbe. The youngest son of the elder Harav Issamar'l, he was the Kechnier *Rebbetzin's* younger brother. Reb Issamar was very attached to him and visited him frequently.

This uncle, the Rebbe of Chadera, was *niftar* last summer, in 5772/2012, at the age of ninety-seven. Several years ago, he handed Reb Issamar a personal letter that remains one of his most cherished possessions. It contains warm words of encouragement, echoing the sentiments of the Rebbe's older sister, Issamar's great-grandmother. In it he gives Reb Issamar his blessing to continue in his role as Kechnier Rebbe in addition to succeeding in business, as many of the previous Nadvorna Rebbes had done, and expresses the hope that

Reb Issamar talking to his great-uncle, the Nadvorner Rebbe of Chadera, *z"l*.



He is  
proud that  
he arrived  
where he  
is today  
without ever  
enrolling in  
a college.  
He is  
particularly  
proud of his  
*yichus*.

*Rabbi Issamar Ginzberg was a featured speaker at the Parnassah Expo that recently took place at the Meadowlands in New Jersey and was attended by over 10,000 people. This is an excerpt from one of his talks.*

## Some **Dos** and **Don'ts** for Retail Stores

**W**hen looking for a new location, most store owners would naturally think that a location near a bank is ideal. Everyone has to go to the bank. It's where they conduct their financial business. Many people want it be convenient, so many retail businesses locate their stores next to banks.

The problem is that people don't particularly like to go to the bank. They go because they have to. Banks are boring. Unless you are rich and doing well financially, banks create feelings of tension. Surveillance devices placed along stretches of sidewalks actually detect people speeding up slightly as they walk past a bank. So if you were looking to open or relocate a shop, locating it next to a bank might actually hurt your business.

This is just one fact illustrative of an entire science called the "economics of agglomeration," which is devoted to determining how, why, and where to locate a business. According to the principles of agglomeration, similar businesses tend to group together. That's why there's a financial district, a clothing district, retail malls, food courts — inside and outside of malls — and industrial parks.

So if running past a store is bad for business, what can a store manager do to slow people down?

One idea that has worked is placing a mirror in the store window. Mirrors make people slow down to look at themselves. Make it a unique, glamorous, mysterious mirror — one that slims the viewer's image a bit. There are "good mirrors" and other mirrors that simply ... don't reflect the true, slim you.

If the item is food, creating a clean look may be all it takes. Restaurants have long been known to waft the aroma of frying onions out the front door. The scent of fresh-baked bread can entice a passerby to linger outside your bakery.

Now that you've slowed them down, what can you do to grab their attention?

A group of students was shown a video clip of a man

coming home from work. Half of the students were told he was a waiter, and half were told he was a librarian. Although the man was not wearing glasses, a high percentage of those told that they were viewing a librarian recalled him wearing glasses. No such recollection was found among those told he was a waiter.

In short, brains — whether they are our own or those of our potential clients — are amazing in both their ability to recollect and in their ability to invent information. We all have a tendency to justify what we *want* to believe. This research has been proven time and again in every field — including law enforcement's study of how accurate eyewitnesses are in describing a crime.

Your display window is limited, but you want it to help bring the customer inside. So be careful not to trust your own instincts. You can never be truly objective because there are certain items you want to push, and the goal at this point is simply to get the shopper to *want* to come inside.

Of course, you should showcase your high-demand items. But they should not take up much window display space; they will be noticed anyway. The items prominently displayed do not necessarily have to be the hottest items.

This is what you should do. Carefully observe people walking around your showroom, or walking along the aisle or studying your menu — whatever your business is. At what items do they linger? What items pique their curiosity, even if most actually end up *not* buying them? Position those items in the most noticeable way in your show window. They will be the reason the passersby will decide to walk in.

Now you have a potential new customer. The best-case scenario is making a successful sale. If that does not work — and especially if it *does* work — you want to make this customer *want* to come back to your shop.

How do you accomplish that? That is a whole topic unto itself!



Reb Issamar delivers a speech at the Jewish National Fund.

Reb Issamar's advice will be given with *siyatta diShmaya*.

Last summer at the *levayah*, Reb Issamar decided that, although he had no specific plans as yet, he would do everything he could to implement the wishes of his saintly uncle and the many other *Admorim* in the family who encouraged him along the same lines.

Being a Rebbe does not mean that one can't be the chassid of another Rebbe. Reb Issamar is a chassid of the Skverer Rebbe, *shlita*, and is close to his uncle, the Kaliver Rebbe of Yerushalayim, *shlita*. He is associated with the Chevra Mevakshim of Nachalas Yaakov and its fiery *mashpia*, Harav Tzvi Meir Zilberberg. Rav Zilberberg's beautiful, uplifting *tefillos* and *tischen* are a source of inspiration and *ruchniyus* for him, recharging his spiritual batteries week after week.

### Facing the World

This continual spiritual refreshment provides Reb Issamar with the energy to be active in the secular world with total confidence and without compromise. His goal is to be *mekadesh Shem Shamayim*. For most of his non-Jewish clients, he is very likely the only Orthodox Jew they have ever met. He feels that he represents all of us, but more importantly, he feels

he represents the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

This task demands much of him. He must be well groomed. His clothes must be neat and clean. His friendly smile must not betray his jet lag. Most importantly, his advice must never bear the least suggestion of anything that could be interpreted as unethical or dishonest. He is, after all, our ambassador.

Reb Issamar Ginzberg is a gifted public



Reb Issamar at Google headquarters.

speaker. He has addressed and had dealings with entities such as Google, the Jewish National Fund, Apple, the University of Tel Aviv, and Bank Hapoalim. He has clients all over the world, even in places such as Dubai, Egypt, the U.K., and France.

He has been featured in *Entrepreneur*, *Fox Business*, *CNBC*, *INC.COM*, and hundreds of other media publications.

### 'Din Prutah K'din Meah'

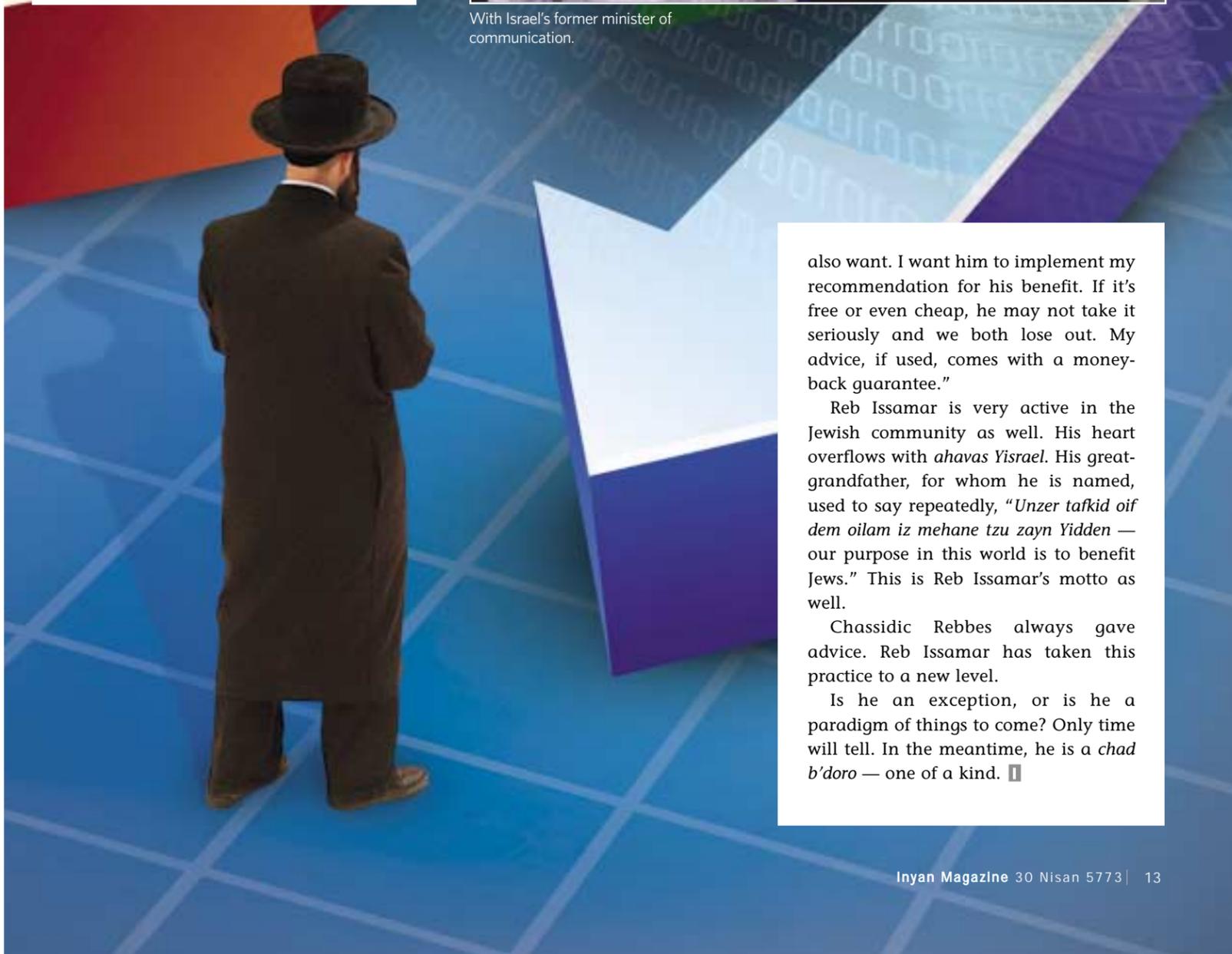
The *Gemara* says that we dare not regard court cases involving large sums as any more important than those involving small sums. Reb Issamar treats all his clients with the same consideration; a neighborhood grocery coming to him for advice will receive the same focused attention as a multinational franchise.

Reb Issamar charges a substantial fee for his counsel. "It is, after all, my source of *parnassah*, and believe me, I can use the money," he explains. "But even more than that is the psychological aspect that matters. I invest a great deal of effort in the guidance I give. I have found that if the client pays for that guidance, he will not take it lightly. He wants to get his money's worth, and that is what I

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With Israel's former minister of communication.



also want. I want him to implement my recommendation for his benefit. If it's free or even cheap, he may not take it seriously and we both lose out. My advice, if used, comes with a money-back guarantee.”

Reb Issamar is very active in the Jewish community as well. His heart overflows with *ahavas Yisrael*. His great-grandfather, for whom he is named, used to say repeatedly, “*Unzer tafkid oif dem oilam iz mehane tzu zayn Yidden* — our purpose in this world is to benefit Jews.” This is Reb Issamar’s motto as well.

Chassidic Rebbes always gave advice. Reb Issamar has taken this practice to a new level.

Is he an exception, or is he a paradigm of things to come? Only time will tell. In the meantime, he is a *chad b’doro* — one of a kind. ■